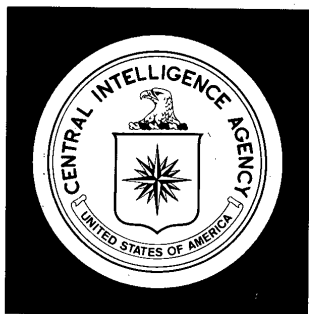




The President's Daily Brief

6 December 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

6 December 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Some important South Vietnamese oppositionists are seeking to unite with President Thieu in an anti-Communist stand during a cease-fire. (Page 1)

Soviet military leaders have muted the usual "anti-imperialist" themes in recent public speeches. (Page 2)



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SOUTH VIETNAM

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Some important opposition elements are seeking a united anti-Communist stand in the cease-fire period. [redacted] a key group of Catholics led by Senate Chairman Nguyen Van Huyen, who earlier this year was among the most outspoken critics of the government, now believes that all opposition groups must support the government in order to prevent a Communist take-over after the fighting stops. Huyen has put out feelers to the government concerning a reconciliation. His group appears to have abandoned an alliance with other opposition senators and recently voted with the progovernment forces in support of President Thieu's peace stand.

Another major opposition group that is reconsidering its position is the An Quang Buddhist element. Many of its leading members favor toning down criticism of the government, at least for the time being. They are said to be more concerned with the survival of an anti-Communist government than with Thieu's shortcomings, and some indicate that they would like to cooperate with Thieu. Other Buddhists, however, such as those in the National Assembly, continue to attack the government and prefer that Thieu step down.

Many of those who favor cooperation with Thieu also believe that the government must broaden its base if it is to survive a political contest with the Communists. This view was recently expressed by influential independent Senator Dang Van Sung, who told US Embassy officers that he fears the Thieu government will be unable to cope with "peace time" problems because of the "military outlook" of Thieu's entourage.

It remains to be seen whether Thieu will take advantage of these opposition sentiments to strengthen his government for the long haul. He has already considered and decided against formally bringing opposition elements into his government, but he might be willing to consider some less formal arrangement. Basically, however, he has little respect for most South Vietnamese politicians or for their political significance.

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USSR

The improved state of Soviet-US relations was exemplified in the recent statements of Soviet military leaders on the annual occasion of Rocket Forces and Artillery Day. Traditionally, this day has been reserved for bellicose bravado stressing the "imperialist threat" and the destructive power of Soviet strategic weapons.

This year such themes were muted, and one of the major speakers had mild praise for the SALT agreement instead. He cited the accord as a "favorable basis for further relaxation of tension," but voiced Moscow's perennial caution that better relations with the USSR can only be built on the basis of strategic equality, with no unilateral military advantages.

Even Marshal Grechko, who last year spoke of "administering a resolute rebuff to any aggressor," was non-polemical. Grechko did not mention SALT, but he went on record in favor of the agreement in his speech to the Supreme Soviet on 29 September, when the treaty was ratified.

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NOTES

India: The government is going to be short one million more tons of grain than it had anticipated, necessitating the import of between two and three million tons. Due to worldwide shortages of rice and wheat, India will have to come to the US for the major share of its foreign purchases of substitute grains. This state of affairs may have something to do with Foreign Minister Swaran Singh's recent statement to parliament in favor of better relations with the US. Singh was backed up this week by Prime Minister Gandhi during one of her informal press conferences.

Fedayeen: Fatah groups, chafing under restrictions imposed on them by Lebanon's government and perhaps Syria's as well, are increasingly turning to fratricidal factionalism. The scapegoat in this situation is Yasir Arafat, whose leadership post is being sought by at least six contenders, the most dangerous of whom is Khalil al Wazir, Syria's candidate.

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[redacted] If Arafat is deposed or killed, there would be little chance that his successor could unify Fatah.

Jordan: [redacted]

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